

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for October 18, 2000

Agenda Items

- Update on Edmunds, Othello and Henderson Stations
- Design Guidelines for Link Light Rail

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, Chair
Matthew Kitchen
Carolyn Law
Jay Lazerwitz
Jack Mackie
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
John Walser, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
Barbara Goldstein, Arts Commission
Sue Kelly, CityDesign
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

The meeting was held at the Prichard Beach Facility, Rainier Beach Complex, and opened with Cheryl Sizov introducing herself and the Panel and explaining who the Link Light Rail Panel is and how they work. The Panel then introduced itself to the presenters and the guests. Jack Mackie took the lead as acting chair, due to the late arrival time of chair Rick Sundberg. Jack Mackie then invited John Walser, of Sound Transit, to present the current status of the station designs for Edmunds, Othello and Henderson, based on previous public meetings and Panel discussions.

Update on Edmunds, Othello and Henderson Stations

John Walser, ST

John began the presentation by discussing the status of the plaza designs for the MLK at-grade light rail stations, and explaining that Sound Transit chose to bring just the plaza drawings to the meeting since the platform drawings are unchanged from earlier presentations to both LRRP and the public. He said he did not want to confuse anyone with out-of-date drawings, preferring to bring new drawings when the changes that have been suggested through community meetings and panel discussions are incorporated. The plaza design plans that were presented were first completed in the spring of 2000. Sound Transit will have "in-progress" drawing of these stations and plazas at a November 14, 2000 community meeting.

Henderson Station

Sound Transit has determined that the stopping location for two-car trains will be in the center of the platform for all stations so that everyone, especially the visually impaired, will know where to board the train when it arrives at the station. This decision has triggered a change in canopy location, now centering it within the two car area. Sound Transit is also deciding where to place windscreens, vending machines and benches. There will be an off-street bus facility on Henderson Street and buses will be stopping on both sides of the street on Henderson and MLK Way S. Bike shelters will be on the north end of the station plaza, though no real plaza has been developed for this station.

Othello Station

The triangular-shaped piece of property at the southern end of the station is the plaza that will house the bike racks. The systems equipment buildings will not be on the plaza but located north

of the station. There is limited space for landscaping and there are concerns regarding the right-of-way from the City. This station will have more of an Asian-themed design.

Edmunds Station

This station will now have two entrances to the platform, also referred to as "double-end loaded", in order to better serve Rainier Vista and provide access from both Alaska and Edmunds Streets. A plaza is located at south end of the station and will be used as a bus/para-transit area. The systems building will be pre-fabricated buildings housed in a trellis-type enclosure that will screen the systems structures from pedestrians. We plan to preserve as many of the large evergreens that are located on the south corner triangle lot as possible. Edmunds Street will be the connector from the station to Columbia City. Materials used at the station and plaza will reflect those materials used in Columbia City.

Panel Discussion

Jack Mackie began by stating that he is disappointed Sound Transit did not come to the meeting adequately prepared with drawings given that the Panel had requested an update and also given the community members in attendance. He added he is unsure of how to have a productive discussion given so few materials to respond to, and feels frustrated to have people's time wasted. The Panel also was expecting to see more information on the materials that will be used at the stations. Sound Transit explained that they understood they were to pick up on what was missed in the 30% progress set of drawings and not necessarily to prepare new drawings. Cheryl Sizov said that she felt partly responsible for the lack of drawings because she was notified that Sound Transit would not be bringing many materials, but the notices for the public meeting had already gone out in the mail and she made the decision not to cancel the meeting. Sound Transit added there will be new drawings to present at the 11/14 Sound Transit community meeting, including diagrams of the street, vicinity maps, the platforms of the stations and the canopies. Discussion continued as follows:

- Will you be showing schematic designs of the stations at the November 14th meeting? (*We will have diagrams of the street and how the stations sit and vicinity maps. We should be able to show where the canopy cover is on the platform and where the windscreens will be. These drawings will not be final drawings, but they will communicate where the stations are and what they will look like in as far as canopy locations.*)
- Will the November 14th meeting be a public meeting, if so we will have to schedule another meeting for the panel? (*That is a public meeting, not a LRRP meeting.*)
- The Panel realizes the intensity of the work that the consultants will need to do on these drawings and we urge you to urge them to generate as much information on the design as possible between now than November 14th so that the public will have new and current information to review. In order to have a positive work session this evening, I want to ask the Panel members for feedback on how to proceed.
- Given the lack of information available tonight, we can look at this as an opportunity to let Sound Transit know what we would LIKE to see and provide some direction as the station and plaza designs progress. In the Edmunds Street station, I applaud you for finally getting to the "double-end loaded" platform station. The little triangle section has often been considered the "gateway" to Columbia City. It is the intersection of a new station as well as residential neighborhood and the design should accommodate these conflicting land uses in a way that benefits both. In terms of traffic and the traffic circle, there was a suggestion a year ago of closing off that little street there so that traffic would have to make a right turn onto Edmunds rather than on to 32nd Avenue S. That would be one way of slowing people down who are using that as a shortcut, assuming that the intersection of Edmunds and MLK will be

signalized, which may increase the number of people speeding down 32nd as a shortcut through that area. *(We have been talking to SEATLAN about that issue.)* It would allow you to create a better plaza in that area.

- Is it possible that the design could change, based on the MLK Corridor work and public comment? *(We received comments from the City in August and we are taking those comments into account. I don't recall that the suggestions from the City were huge changes in direction of the design, nonetheless the design is likely to evolve as we spend more time working through the details.)*
- One thing I would urge Sound Transit to consider is taking a closer look the old station and plaza designs to see whether they still work, given the redesign for the MLK Corridor. With the success you have had with the MLK corridor, I would hate to see it lose it's strength through poorly coordinated station design work. *(Owen Lang will be retained for this project as the principal Urban Design partner who will be reporting directly to Sound Transit.)*
- I think it makes sense in a double-ended station to have the cars stop in the middle, and I would like to see some visual image of what exactly that means, between the 2, 3 and 4 car trains. Does one car always stop in one place or does this alternate depending on the number of cars? *(The design will be the same at all stations, that the 2-car trains will stop in the center of the platform, and if it is a 3-car train, 2 of the 3 cars will be in the center of the platform. The doors to the train will always be in the same place. Due to some of the stations with a multitude of entries, we want the trains to stop in the same location, primarily for the visually impaired and disabled passengers.)*
- We would like to see the design of the system structures/facilities; what they look like, the size, the colors, the building materials being considered for them, and where they will be located. We may need a whole meeting on this topic alone. Will the architect designing the station also design these structures or is someone else doing it system-wide? *(Yes, the architect will be designing these.)*
- Will the artists and architects be working together on the design of these stations and plazas? *(We are trying to fold the artists' work into the MLK Corridor design work, looking at station plazas and other locations. In many ways we have been looking at the station plazas, but not just these plazas, but also some other areas near the stations that might be better. For instance, at Edmunds the plaza, at the north end that does not have all the systems buildings as a location for artwork. We are working with the architects to determine the dynamics of the architecture and to have the art fold into that. Also looking at artworks that in themselves could be a landmark for the community and a source of pride. We are hoping to select some artists in the next month or so.)*
- Where will the OCS issues be addressed—with the artists' or the architects? *(It was something that came up during Owen's workshops and he is looking at what can be done along this corridor that will work well with the urban design and others are looking at where the art opportunities are with the support poles, perhaps a combination of structural and art design that goes into the function of the cross arms and what happens at the top of the poles.)*
- The systems/communications building are prefabricated and will have the trellis structure around them? *(The architects are looking at architectural enhancements, either hiding them or making them so that the visual presence is something that works with the plaza; if they are on a separate piece of property how well they blend in with the area.)*
- We have been looking at all of these issues in pieces; could we take a station, Edmunds or any other station, and look at all of the elements at one meeting? We realize that the urban design is going to require a non-standard approach, and we do need an integrated look at the whole thing. *(I need clarification, are we talking about this from a program standpoint?)*
- We need to see all of this information at one time in order to make the kind of recommendations that we are being asked to make. Whether it is next month or two months

from now, that is something that Sound Transit has to schedule with us. Also to see what the surrounding area is like and how the flow of traffic, pedestrian and vehicle will be like navigating around the station would be very helpful to view this holistically. *(We will do one station at a time.)*

- At the Othello station, in the space that is off the drawing, there is a street that will become a cul-de-sac—is there any opportunity here to create a larger open space? The sidewalks along MLK and Othello aren't very far from the cul-de-sac, are there plans for that space, can it be part of the two halves of the street plaza design? *(We have talked to the property owner in this area and he indicated the desire to pursue closing off part of that street in order gain some development rights from the City.)*

Public Comment

- What is going to happen to the plaza piece at the Henderson station? *(As it stands right now, the business on the corner stays. The businesses as you proceed south on MLK will stay. At the corner of, not sure of the street name, we will be acquiring a portion of the parking lot of the property to put our systems buildings back in this area.)*
- Comment on the Edmunds Station plaza, I want to caution Sound Transit that the small triangle with the evergreen trees is not pleasant, but extremely dangerous. Should also consider a street vacation on the portion of 32nd Street south of Edmunds.
- First thing that I want to say is that, "You guys rock!" I have never been to a meeting before with Sound Transit that I have agreed with anything that has been said by the people behind the tables. I am amazed and awed, thank you. I find it a little offensive to call these plazas, they are not plazas; they are little pieces of land. The word plaza implies meeting area, and these are not that.
- I have a question regarding the Henderson Station. I am concerned we haven't seen a drawing since Sound Transit has talked about moving the bus turn-around. The little street behind where the bus turn-around will be, Valdez, are you looking at ways to make traffic move more smoothly there?
- I just want to repeat what was said about the small triangle at the Edmunds Station, I have done clean up work on that site. It is a very difficult site to clean up due to the pine trees, it is not an open space as it is, and it deserves another look. Certainly, closing the section of 32nd Street where speeding cars are a problem, is well worth a look.
- My comment is on process, I attended the C-Link meeting last week and saw all kinds of drawings and there wasn't any indication that anything would significantly change. Here we are just a week later and now there is discussion about upcoming changes to existing drawings, but C-Link members were led to believe that everything is in place. My other comment is that the proposed 30% coverage of the canopies at the station does not seem like enough coverage. Eventually, there will be a lot of people using the stations and we do not enjoy being wet and cold. Why only 30% coverage? *(I made it clear to the Sound Transit Board at the beginning of the presentation last week that these were old drawings, and that there will be an update with new drawings done. There will be canopies both at the fare vending equipment, at the end of the platforms, and there will be centering canopies where the cars stop.)*

- What is the potential for glass or translucent roof on the canopies at the Henderson Station?
- I would be interested to hear about the mechanics of the train itself. Do the doors open on both sides or only on one side? Is the operator going to have control of that? What do the 3 tracks mean that are shown on the board, is the yellow area the waiting area? *(At Henderson Station, the yellow area is the platform area. There are tracks on either side, Northbound trains on the one side and Southbound trains on the other. You will enter the station at a signalized crosswalk at the intersection of Henderson & MLK; you will cross over the tracks with the signals and then enter the platform and wait for the train. The third track line is a storage track facility for trains. The trains do have doors on both sides, and that allows the vehicles to pull up to the station and open the doors on the platform side, the operator controls this.)*
- The 30% coverage of the canopies is really not enough. The weather is too wet and cold and we need more coverage. *(How we determined 30% coverage which is about 130' of the actual platform, was based on peak period ridership. In looking at what we really need at some stations it is less than 10%, but at minimum, we wanted to have all the stations to at least have the minimum coverage.)*
- In materials that you have, it might be better to be able to show visually what 30% coverage actually means. *(This 30% coverage is in addition to the fare vending coverage.)*
- Comment on the Othello Station; are the systems buildings going away? *(There will be the buildings on the eastside of MLK, just north of Othello. The signal buildings are being moved to a location on property north of Myrtle Street just off of MLK.)*
- What kind of design will be in that additional space at Othello? It is a small space and I want to be sure that it does not become an after thought. *(The removal of the systems buildings will increase the total bike storage capacity at the north and south ends of the station and will trigger how we look at this piece of property.)*
- How did the boulder theme that you have for this station come about?
- I really think that psychologically, we need to have more canopy coverage at the station. Also, is there any change to the arts budget? *(Yes, there is. Same amount of money will be for each station and what we have done in the corridor is look at what could be done in the area between the stations. We are looking at what seems to make sense for this segment, we are going to distribute the money throughout the corridor versus on a station by station basis.)*
- Have you thought about what this area will look like in the next 20-30 years? How will this backbone of light rail serve us into the future? *(We have looked at that in the design process, unfortunately, no one brought that with them today.)*
- We aren't designing for 2006, but for probably the next 100 years. Looking at the zoning changes proposed and the growth projections that we have now, suggests that 30% canopy coverage isn't enough.

- When you are talking about the two systems buildings at Edmunds, and that you would put vegetation and trellis work around to mask them, why not just make them attractive to begin with?
- Do you have any comments on public toilets at the stations? (*The current Metro and Sound Transit policy is that there will be no public restrooms along the line, except at Northgate.*)

Update on Seattle Design Guidelines for Link Light Rail

Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

Cheryl Sizov presented an outline for the Southeast Seattle Stations Design Guidelines. As you have seen tonight, the Panel reviews the work that Sound Transit brings to it and is advisory to both the City and Sound Transit. There is also the City permit process, that you are probably aware of. Sound Transit will be going to the City for a variety of permits to build the system. The permits are a regulatory tool and the Panel is an advisory body. The Design Guidelines are the "bridge" between the advisory work of the panel and the regulatory work that the City conducts.

When completed, these Design Guidelines will describe the sort of performance or expectations that the City has, through the Panel's work, for the design of all the stations in Seattle. That is why the design guidelines are very important, because as City permit reviewers are looking at drawings from Sound Transit, there will be a lot of design details and staff will be taking direction on design issues from the Guidelines. This is an outline of the sorts of issues that the Design Guidelines address. It is a way of organizing our thoughts about how the stations should look and function. We will be developing a draft for public comment, although I don't yet have a specific date when the draft will be completed. We will make it available to the public. Ultimately, when the draft guidelines are completed and we get all the comments from members of the public, City staff, and from Sound Transit, we will revise the guidelines as needed and the Panel will adopt them, making any changes deemed necessary. Finally, the DCLU Director and the SEATLAN Director will sign the guidelines into law. This document then becomes part of the permit process. That is the way we will translate the kinds of advice that is happening here from the Panel into something that becomes a regulatory tool.

The other handout available tonight is the Design Guidelines for the Royal Brougham Station and the Lander Station. These have already been adopted as a SEATLAN and DCLU Directors Rule. You can review this to get a sense of what the design guidelines cover, and what the Southeast-related guidelines will be like.

Additional Panel Discussion

- With respect to community comments regarding platform coverage, I think there needs to be a reasonable way of documenting Sound Transit's calculation. I think that Sound Transit needs to graphically show not only LRRP, but also the community, how well the proposed coverage works. Not only the canopy coverage but also the issue of windscreens.
- Earlier this year, LRRP, the City, and Sound Transit all recognized that design work for McClellan and the MLK Corridor needed to slow down and, in some instances, be substantially revised. To Sound Transit's, credit they did slow down, and have expended great effort toward station design in Southeast Seattle—I want to acknowledge that and note LRRP's appreciation of that effort.

Action

The panel would like to thank the citizens who have taken the time, effort, care and consideration to attend this evening to participate in this review with us and we with you. The Panel may want to consider these types of meetings more often. We do want to thank Sound Transit for taking the time to slow down the corridor design so that public participation and public consideration of issues come forward. With that, we make the following recommendations to Sound Transit:

- *The new drawings being prepared for the November 14th public meeting should include materials to illustrate the broader neighborhood context and how these stations fit and operate within it.*
- *For 60% design development review of the Southeast stations, the Panel recommends reviewing one station at a time (starting with Edmunds) and addressing all aspects of design in that review—fit with context and station area planning goals and neighborhood plans, coordination with the MLK Corridor urban design, design and location of systems structures, signage and wayfinding, integration of art concepts, and related street improvements—in order to give the Panel and the public the benefit of a comprehensive presentation of the proposed design work.*
- *Design solutions to pedestrian safety issues need to be clearly shown in all design presentations.*
- *The possibility of vacating short segments of streets at Edmunds and Henderson stations needs to be carefully considered, weighing the possible benefits with adverse impacts. Issues to consider include changes to pedestrian movement and safety, traffic circulation, open space, loss of public right-of-way, loss of connectivity, and alteration of the street grid. We are not recommending street vacations at this time, but encourage Sound Transit to study the possibilities here in Southeast Seattle where MLK bisects the street grid at an angle.*
- *Encourage Sound Transit to use the Edmunds plaza as a gateway to Columbia City and to resolve the intersection geometry of the streets in that area (related to street vacation issue described above).*
- *In future drawings, the Panel requests that Sound Transit drawings incorporate information about the immediate context including other buildings.*
- *We recommend that Sound Transit reconsider the use of pre-fabricated buildings for the systems buildings, in consideration of designing the buildings as ones we would view as part of the neighborhood and an asset to the community.*
- *The Panel urges further development of the program for each plaza including a clear definition of how it will be used by Sound Transit and the community.*
- *The Panel recommends the use of transparent or translucent materials in the canopies, and that Sound Transit show how shelter for mobility impaired will be accommodated close to the entry area. The design should also show what the 30% canopy coverage really means and what that means in terms of how many people are accommodated in the space.*

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM.